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SUBJECT: ANKARA MEDIA REACTION REPORT

THURSDAY, AUGUST 16, 2007

In Today's Papers

Erdogan Defends Gul's Presidential Candidacy

All papers report Prime Minister Erdogan told the press after a party meeting Wednesday he believed Turkey would complete the presidential election due next week with "democratic maturity," in an effort to dismiss fears of a clash with the secular elite. In his first public comments since Gul announced his candidacy, Erdogan also said he fully supported the FM's bid to become head of state, quashing speculation that he had not wanted Gul to run. In remarks seen by the papers as a response to earlier comments from Chief of Staff General Buyukanit that the president should be "loyal to the principles of the republic - not just in words but in essence," Erdogan said Gul is what he says he is. On the issue of Gul's wife wearing a headscarf, Erdogan said the wife of Ataturk also wore a headscarf. Papers took exception to the remark, pointing out that Ataturk's wife did not wear the headscarf of political Islam, but sometimes wore a traditional Turkish head covering. The PM also underlined Gul's candidacy was welcomed both at home and outside Turkey. "In telephone conversations, we have heard that political leaders outside Turkey are pleased with regard to Gul's candidacy. It strengthens Turkey's position among the world countries. We may have the opportunity to carry out more active work in the EU process," said Erdogan.

Gul Tours NGOs, Labor Unions to Garner Support

All papers report that on Wednesday, Abdullah Gul paid visits to the Turkish Confederation of Employers' Unions (TISK), the Confederation of Revolutionary Trade Unions (DISK), and the Turkish Union of Chambers (TOBB) in an effort to seek support for his presidential bid. TOBB president Rifat Hisarciklioglu said Gul was a good candidate for the presidency, adding that for the sake of democracy everybody should respect the preferences of the parliament. Gul told reporters after his round of talks that his headscarf-wearing wife will not be a problem. Gul said wearing the headscarf was his wife's personal choice which should be respected within the framework of individual rights. "It is me who is running for

president, not my wife" said Gul. Gul was pleased with his round of talks with civil society organizations, papers report.

Editorial Commentary on Gul as New President

Hasan Cemal writes in the mainstream daily Milliyet: "Gul may be not the one for all. Some may like him, some may not. Some may think that he is not suitable for the presidency. Yet the course of democracy goes through respect for different views and tolerating others. In democracies, any kind of thinking is welcomed as long as the rules are respected. It is not right to make an argument about the legitimacy of Gul's candidacy. Everything is moving along according to constitutional principles; therefore, there is no room for a debate over legitimacy. The ruling AKP, by garnering the vast majority of the votes, certainly has the right to bring its candidate up to the presidential palace. This is not pushing the limits. If you ask me, the military's warning on April 27 was pushing the limits. Turkey needs no tension, no conflict. We have to interpret the results of the July 22 election in the right context. We should feel relief and go for stability."

Soli Ozel writes in the mainstream daily Sabah: "When Gul announced his candidacy for the first time some four months ago, Turkey went through a crisis period. Today we have come back to exactly where we were. Nevertheless the four-month period, even though tension filled, has brought some positive lessons. First of all, by announcing Gul once again for the presidency, the ruling AKP declared that it will not take 'unwritten rules of the regime' into consideration. In other words, the headscarf will not be an obstacle, and Turkey will have to live with the new situation. This stance of the AKP does not necessarily constitute defiance of the army but it is a step toward political normalization. Given his past record, Gul will certainly be an active president. Turkey has a challenging period ahead due to international issues. Gul, with

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his foreign ministry experience, will be able to engage in international relations more than before. Turkey is heading toward a new era, and if it is managed properly, Turkey will create a unique model in world politics."

Erdogan to Submit His Cabinet List to Sezer Today

All papers report Prime Minister Erdogan is expected to submit the new cabinet list to President Sezer on Thursday. The total number of ministers in the cabinet will increase from 22 to 24. Papers claim that some ministries such The Ministry for Culture and Tourism will be divided into two. Zaman says a new ministry for water, metals and Southeastern Anatolia Project (GAP) will be set up. Radikal expects a new ministry in charge of EU negotiations. Hurriyet thinks there will be two new ministries - one for water and one for motorways. Vatan says that as a gesture, Gul will be placed in the new cabinet list as Deputy PM and Foreign Minister so that he can officially retain the posts until he assumes the role of president. If Sezer vetoes any of the ministers, Erdogan will resubmit his list to the new president expected to be elected in the third round of voting in parliament on August 28.

Glocks Seized at Habur Border Gate

Mainstream Sabah reports that five Glock guns were seized at the Habur Border Gate, the crossing point between Iraq and Turkey. In a written statement, the Sirnak Governor's Office stated that the Glocks were seized in a Turkish truck, entering Turkey from Iraq.

PKK Bomber Arrested in Istanbul

Sabah, Milliyet, Vatan and others: Papers report that a PKK member named Nimet Turkan was arrested in Istanbul yesterday while he was delivering 8 kg of A-4 plastic explosives and one kg of TNT powder explosives he brought from Diyarbakir to PKK bombers in Istanbul. Mainstream Milliyet reported that the suspect claimed that the PKK forced him to deliver the explosives to Istanbul with a threat that they would kill his eight children otherwise.

TV Highlights

NTV

Domestic News

- PM Erdogan will join a ceremony today to be hosted by President Sezer in which the state meritorious service award will be presented to businessman Jak Kamhi.

- Having stepped down from his party chairmanship after the major defeat in the July 22 elections, DP leader Mehmet Agar announced he was still chairman of the party and urged party officials to hold an extraordinary congress.

- Five forest fires broke out in the western province of Manisa in the last four days. The blazes threaten the city of Izmir.

- The Turkish Red Crescent has sent 16 trucks of humanitarian aid comprising food, water, tents, and medicine worth 1 billion Turkish Lira to Iraq.

International News

- A spokesman for the Greek Cypriot government said President Papadopoulos was ready for talks with Turkish Cyprus leader Talat.

- Turkish Cyprus "Foreign Minister" Turgay Avci said Turkish Cypriots and Turkey will make no concessions in the controversy with Greek Cypriots over oil exploration in the eastern Mediterranean.

- Hizbullah leader Nasrallah warned Israel against launching another war on Lebanon, saying any attack "will be faced with a colossal surprise likely to change the fate of the war and the region."

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- Police in the Netherlands have received a flood of complaints against a call to ban the Koran made by MP Geert Wilders, leader of the anti-immigration party PVV.

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